

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS:

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Currently amended) ~~The content distribution system of Claim 1, wherein:~~ A content distribution system including at least one distribution server for distributing digital contents via a network in response to requests from user terminals, said content distribution system comprising:

a reference server operable to hold at least one piece of location information showing a location of a distribution server on the network, and to transmit one of the pieces of location information to one of the user terminals in response to a user request,

wherein each distribution server includes:

a determining unit operable to determine, when said respective distribution server is accessed by one of the user terminals, whether the user terminal has connected to said respective distribution server using one of the at least one pieces of location information received from said reference server as a connection target;

a generating unit operable to generate:

(1) a piece of first payment information instructing the user terminal to pay a purchase fee to said respective distribution server, when the user terminal is determined to have connected without receiving the piece of location information from said reference server, and

(2) a piece of second payment information instructing the user terminal to pay a purchase fee to both said respective distribution server and said reference server, when the user terminal is determined to have connected using the piece of location information received from said reference server; and

a transmitting unit operable to transmit (a) one of the generated pieces of first and second payment information and (b) a digital content to the user terminal,

the piece of first payment information instructs the user terminal to pay all of a purchase fee for playback rights of the digital content to ~~the~~ said respective distribution server; and

the piece of second payment information instructs the user terminal to pay a% of the purchase

fee for playback rights of the digital content to ~~the~~ said reference server, and (100-a)% to ~~the~~ said respective distribution server.

3. **(Currently amended)** The content distribution system of Claim 2, wherein:
the piece of second payment information instructs the user terminal to pay a% of the purchase fee to ~~the~~ said reference server as a commission for having notified the user terminal of a distribution server location.

4. **(Currently amended)** The content distribution system of Claim 4, including a plurality of distribution servers, wherein ~~the~~ said reference server includes:

a first storage unit operable to store a plurality of pieces of location information, each showing a location of one of ~~the~~ said plurality of distribution servers, in correspondence with content-related phrases, each relating to a digital content transmitted by ~~the~~ said one of said plurality of distribution server servers;

a receiving unit operable to receive a keyword input from the user terminal when the user terminal performs an access; and

a search unit operable to search for at least one piece of location information with a content-related phrase partially or wholly matching the keyword input, and output the matching at least one piece of location information to the user terminal.

5. **(Currently amended)** The content distribution system of Claim 4, wherein:
~~the~~ said first storage unit is further operable to store a plurality of pieces of content sales information in ~~correspondance~~ correspondence with content-related phrases for each digital content, each piece of content sales information showing, for each digital content, one of an encoding method, a playback quality, and a purchase fee for playback rights; and

~~the~~ said reference server further includes:

a distribution guide generation unit operable to fetch, if the search unit has found content-related phrases matching the keyword, pieces of content sales information corresponding to

the content-related phrases, and generating distribution guide information from the pieces of content sales information,

and wherein ~~the~~ said search unit is operable to transmit the generated distribution guide information to the user terminal in correspondence with pieces of location information for distribution servers transmitting corresponding digital contents.

6. **(Currently amended)** The content distribution system of Claim 4, wherein ~~the~~ said first storage unit is further operable to store pieces of playback software information, each showing playback software for playing back a digital content, in correspondence with location information for each distribution server transmitting the digital ~~content~~; content,

~~the~~ wherein said receiving unit is operable to receive, from the user terminal, a piece of playback software information indicating a playback software used by the user terminal, together with a keyword specifying the digital ~~content~~; content, and

~~the~~ wherein said search unit is operable to inform the user terminal, when a plurality of content-related phrases matching the keyword exist, of only the content-related phrases with a corresponding piece of playback software information matching the piece of playback software information generated by the user terminal.

7. **(Currently amended)** The content distribution system of Claim 4, wherein the reference server further includes:

a second storage unit operable to store a plurality of digital contents in correspondence with content-related phrases;

a determining unit operable to determine whether a keyword input received from the user terminal partially or wholly matches a content-related phrase stored in ~~the~~ said second storage unit;

a reading unit operable to read, when a matching content-related phrase exists, a digital content corresponding to the matching content-related phrase from the plurality of digital contents stored in ~~the~~ said second storage unit;

a generating unit operable to generate a piece of payment information instructing a user

terminal to pay a purchase fee to ~~the~~ said reference server when the matching related phrase exists;
a transmitting unit operable to transmit the read digital content and the generated piece of payment information to the user terminal; and

wherein, when the matching related phrase cannot be found in ~~the~~ said second storage unit, the search unit is operable to inform the user terminal of a piece of location information stored in ~~the~~ said first storage unit that has a content-related phrase partially or wholly matching the keyword.

8. **(Currently amended)** The content distribution system of Claim 7, wherein ~~the~~ said reference server further includes:

a collection unit operable to collect sales commission from a purchase fee for playback rights for a digital content paid to ~~the~~ said reference server by the user terminal, and pay a remainder of the purchase fee to an owner of the digital content, in accordance with a piece of third payment information.

Claims 9-22 **(Cancelled)**